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SUBJECT: DART WESTERN IRAQ UPDATE 8 JUNE

SUMMARY

1. DART Field Team West visited a rural health center and two village water supply units on 8 June in An Najaf with DART-partner International Rescue Committee, which has already begun DART-funded work in rural water and health in An Najaf and Karbala. The DART also met with WFP staff, who said the June food distribution was going according to schedule. Before departing An Najaf, the DART spoke with members of the Coalition's Governorate Support Team to share updates and receive briefs on various new sectoral projects. End Summary.

AN NAJAF FOOD UPDATE

2. U.N. World Food Program (WFP) staff in An Najaf reported that on-going June distributions are progressing without major difficulties. The issue of increased transportation costs continues to irritate food agents, and WFP has received continuous complaints that the reimbursement amounts announced by the Ministry of Trade (MOT) do not compensate drivers sufficiently. This issue remains unresolved.

3. WFP is working with the MOT to prepare lists of needed equipment, supplies, and repairs for PDS infrastructure, as well as a list of employees at the warehouses and silo that qualify for overtime. These lists will be presented to the Coalition's Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) for verification and possible funding. The CMOC confirmed this process and agreed to work closely with WFP and the MOT to facilitate improvements to the public distribution system (PDS).

4. WFP reported receiving 150 metric tons (MT) of beans and 300 MT of rice from neighboring governorates to round out needed food stocks to complete June's distribution. Although final stock numbers are difficult to confirm, WFP is confident that all June rations will be distributed as specified for the announced June ration in An Najaf. WFP will soon begin monitoring actual beneficiary distributions for June to assure that the final step in the PDS is properly satisfied.

5. It also confirmed that 130,000 MT of older wheat is stored in the area. According to WFP, 47,000 MT of this wheat was purchased under the U.N. Oil for Food Program last year in Russia, Australia, and Syria. The remaining 83,000 MT is supposedly an older, local purchase, but exact purchase dates are not confirmed. WFP agreed to collect additional and more accurate information on these older stocks from the MOT in An Najaf to determine age, location, origin, and quality of the wheat.

6. WFP reported that Save the Children would be working with WFP in the An Najaf Governorate on vulnerable group feedings. The DART was not able to contact Save the Children to discuss this issue.

7. The MOT has received letters informing them of a USD 50,000 operation account that will soon be established for PDS operational costs. No other news or instructions have been received by WFP in An Najaf on the management of this account.

RURAL HEALTH IN AN NAJAF

18. Fifty percent of children under the age of five in the El Hideria area of An Najaf are malnourished, according to the director of the El Hideria Primary Health Center (PHC) with whom the DART met on 8 June with partner International Rescue Committee (IRC). Many of the area's residents are poor, he said, including 14,000 of the area's 35,000 people who were internally displaced from the south in 1991. He said they were living in difficult conditions with no electricity, potable water, transportation, adequate healthcare, livelihoods, or education for their children. IRC has proposed supporting the El Hideria PHC with DART funds, in addition to supporting seven other PHCs in rural An Najaf and Karbala.

19. Prior to the war, the PHC, which has five doctors (three women), received 110 patients a day. Since the advent of free drugs one week ago, the director said that number has increased to over 200. At 10:45 a.m. on June 8, 180 patients had already entered the health center seeking treatment. Since the end of the war, unexploded ordnance (UXOs) have injured 30 to 35 area residents. Last week, the PHC treated three UXO injuries. Half of all injured were children.

10. The PHC Director said diarrhea was the greatest problem for children, and that many of the area's poor did not have sufficient funds to travel to the PHC. The first 50 of 70 child patients entering the PHC on 8 June suffered from diarrhea. Fueling the problem, he said, was that 70 percent of local residents rely on unfiltered river water. Many receive water from tankers whose owners charge according to the quantity and quality of water. Fifty percent of the area's children were lower than average on the weight-for-height chart, according to the director. Another large health problem, he said, was Typhoid fever with about 30 cases a day. Among female adults, anemia was the greatest problem. The director said 25 percent of women suffered from severe anemia.

Other challenges facing the PHC include:

- Half of the PHC's power comes from its generator; the other half from the sporadic governorate electric grid;
- The center normally gets two hours of piped water in the morning and two hours in the afternoon;
- During the war, the immunization program stopped, but it has since restarted;
- The staff has not received post-war salary payments yet, although they have gotten their USD 20 emergency payments;
- The PHC has stocks of many drugs, but it is short on certain essential items;
- Following the war, thieves tried to steal the PHC's generator and some drugs; and
- The PHC's x-ray room has been closed for 10 years and is covered with dust.

RURAL WATER IN AN NAJAF

11. The DART visited two compact water treatment units (CWTU) in rural An Najaf on 8 June that partner IRC has been rehabilitating with DART funds. IRC has already begun work on five others, and proposes to rehabilitate a total of 33 in An Najaf, and to replace nine with temporary treatment units. There are 60 CWTUs in An Najaf. The DART visited compact water units in El Barakia and El Bonoman. El Barakia provides 1,000 cubic meters of water a day and serves 2,000 people; El Bonoman produces 300 cubic meters of treated water per day and serves over 2,000. The El Barakia system has a pipe network of 4 kilometers (kms), and the El Bonoman extends for 3 kms. Each network is in good condition. With IRC's intervention at El Barakia, the unit's water capacity increased and its water quality improved with the restarting of the chlorinator. Prior to IRC's involvement at the El Bonoman unit, the system pumped river water directly into the network. Now, the water is filtered, and soon, will be treated with chlorine.

AN NAJAF GOVERNORATE SUPPORT TEAM UPDATE

12. The DART visited the CMOC in An Najaf on 8 June and spoke with members of the Governorate Support Team (GST). The following are some updates from the meeting:

- Security: Nine classes have gone through a four-day

training course, totaling approximately 600 police officers that have been trained thus far. They have also been provided with basic equipment (uniforms, weapons, whistles, etc.); they hope to train another 600 officers who will be in charge of rural areas.

-- Salaries: Government employees have been paid for April, and they hope to catch up to June salaries by the end of the month. The Ministry of Welfare and Benefits attempted to pay out retirement, welfare, and pension payments on 8 June, however, crowd control was a problem and payments were postponed until a better system could be established.

-- Fuel: An Najaf received 1,300 bottles of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) on 8 June and 17 trucks of fuel on 7 June. The GST has been told that regular distributions to the city will begin in the next couple of days.

-- The CMOC is concerned about "a squatter problem" in the city. According to the CMOC, many, if not all, of the vacant buildings are being occupied by squatter families. CMOC has also heard that one of the local orphanages and the mental health institution have also been occupied by squatters, which is preventing orphans and patients from accessing services in these buildings. According to the head of the GST, Save the Children is attempting to find office and living space in the city, but has not yet found anything adequate.

-- Health: A Coalition Civil Affairs (CA) officer recently assessed seven rural health clinics in An Najaf and said of them, "The farther we go out, the worse they are." He said some of the 19 PHCs and 17 "sub-clinics" in An Najaf have no equipment, air-conditioning, windows, and little supplies of drugs. He is developing proposals to revamp 17 PHCs at a cost of USD 1,000 each. He said IRC had delivered the DART-funded emergency health kits and that they were being distributed. "They were happy to see them," he said of Ministry of Health (MOH) personnel in An Najaf. He has also arranged for 120 security personnel to be added to the MOH payroll. The new guards will have a one-day training and will patrol the city's five hospitals that are still facing insecurity.

-- Education: CA officers gave 18 schools in An Najaf USD 500 each for immediate rehabilitation. The school staff can spend the funds on replacing windows and doors, painting walls, repairing electricity and plumbing, or provide supplies and furnishings. The choice lies with the school staff. Receipts for all purchases must be returned within two weeks. The CA officers said they would do the same for all 550 Najaf schools (at a cost of USD 250,000) if they had the funds. Other Coalition units have renovated 10 schools and plan to complete more before the start of the new school year.

HUMAN RIGHTS SOCIETY OF AN NAJAF

13. The DART attempted to visit the Human Rights Society in An Najaf on 8 June; however, it had closed for the afternoon. The DART was able to speak to the guard and were told that the society had just recently begun work. Most of its focus at this time is on the missing and prisoners of war. Their building is quite rudimentary; there is no glass on any of the windows, for example, and a family of squatters is living in the room next door.

JONES